



Office of Council Member Kathie Tovo

301 W. Second St, Austin, TX 78701 | (512) 978-2109 | austintexas.gov/district9

Budget Amendment #1: Early Childhood FTE

Co-sponsors: Mayor Pro Tem Garza, Council Member Alter

Community Benefits of a devoted Early Childhood Program Coordinator in Austin Public Health

Austin Public Health currently has no staff member who focuses solely on the issue of early childhood initiatives. An Early Childhood Program Coordinator at Austin Public Health will help support the ongoing work in this area and the increased work due to the coronavirus pandemic. An additional investment in the form of a dedicated staff member can be expected to contribute to the following benefits to the community:

- Increase availability of high-quality early childhood education (ECE) and Pre-K
- Increase equitable access to high quality early childhood education
- Increase quality early childhood education and Pre-K
 - A recent report on the economic impact of childcare noted Texas is missing out on economic gains since only 11% of childcare providers are certified high-quality by state or national standards. (Children at Risk, November 2018. *Building Brains & Economies*. <https://childrenatrisk.org/building-brains/>)
- Educate community, families with young children, and the City of Austin workforce about critical importance of and ways to support high-quality early education and early childhood experiences
- Support efforts to ensure a sustainable supply of affordable, high-quality early childhood education
 - Increased compensation for childcare workforce- if workforce does not earn a living wage and can't afford to live in Austin, our community will not have enough qualified staff to meet the childcare needs of Austinites; this is an equity issue as the majority of the child care workforce is made up of women of color with low-income
 - Support City of Austin funding initiatives focused on childcare relief, stabilization, and recovery during COVID-19
- Support community efforts to build the childcare system back better beyond the immediate COVID-19 crisis so that childcare works well for families, childcare programs, and the child care workforce
- Sustain and enhance cross-departmental efforts to provide quality City of Austin supports and services for young children and their families. This includes coordination with:



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- Austin Public Library, Parks and Recreation Department, Economic Development Department, Office of Real Estate Services, Development Services Department, Austin Resource Recovery, the Equity Office, and other City departments;
- Human Resources Department related to family-friendly worksites;
- Austin Public Health programs including, for example, Early Childhood, Family Connects, Maternal Infant Outreach Program, and WIC.
- Assist with existing City on-site childcare projects, such as Bergstrom Tech and Dove Springs Wellness Center childcare centers, as well as future potential projects, such as an on-site childcare project in Colony Park and the Planning and Development Center at Highland Mall.
- Community engagement with childcare providers, community members, and families with young children, such as through:
 - Childcare provider forums
 - COVID-19 childcare provider task force
 - Community input on City early childhood initiatives and childcare centers
 - Early Childhood Council and the Quality of Life Boards and Commissions.

All of the above will help children in our community, their families, and the broader Austin community reap the numerous proven **benefits of high-quality early care and education and high-quality Pre-K:**

- Increased school readiness rates (which includes social-emotional, language and communication, emergent literacy, and math skills needed for success in kindergarten)
- Increased academic achievement over medium and long-term including improved 3rd grade math and reading scores; reduced likelihood of special education placement and grade level retention; and an increased likelihood of graduating high school
- Reduction in the incidence of future health issues, substance use, and criminal activity that are more likely when children have poor early childhood experiences
- Long-term economic benefits for our future workforce
- Short-term and medium-term economic benefits for families and our community:
 - Access to high-quality childcare is an essential component of the economic infrastructure. In Austin, 60% of children under 6 have all available parents in the workforce.



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- Among the nonworking poor with young children (11.4% of the nonworking poor), 70% cite lack of childcare one of the reasons they are not in the workforce.
- Return on Investment: Every dollar invested in the formal childcare sector results in \$15.25 in additional income for parents.
- Affordable childcare increases family incomes by allowing more parents—especially mothers—to work. If childcare costs decreased by 10 percent, the employment rate for single women would increase by 2 percent, and for married women it would increase by 10 percent. Full government funding of early-childhood education (including childcare) would increase overall maternal employment by up to 10 percent.
- The lack of affordable, high-quality childcare is a barrier to the creation of middle-skill employment in Austin, which plays into the affordability issues facing our community.
- Previous work conducted by the local economic and public policy consulting firm, TXP, estimates that the annual cost to the City of someone who is capable of working but is not employed is approximately \$3,000 – a combination of foregone tax revenue and access to means-tested social programs. Note, this figure does not include the educational and development impact on children in high-quality programs.

Finally, an additional Early Childhood staff person will help the City of Austin to achieve the **early childhood strategies and metrics in the Strategic Direction 2023** in the Economic Opportunity and Affordability section which include:

- Strategy:
 - “Create equitable access to quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) by supporting families who do not qualify for existing free programs and cannot afford quality programs on their own, increasing availability of quality ECE programs, and encouraging living wages for ECE providers.”
- Metrics/community indicators:
 - Number and percentage of children enrolled in quality Early Childhood Education programs (as evidenced by meeting Texas Rising Star criteria).
 - Percentage of households that are considered cost-burdened based on calculation of housing and transportation costs relative to income (utilities, childcare, property tax, and health care costs to be added as data becomes available)